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ABSTRACT

This book chronicles African American higher education as viewed by 20 presidents and presidents emeriti from several historically black colleges (HBCs). Interview excerpts are used to illustrate how HBCs outside the established, accepted educational structure have been inadequately financed and staffed, have been without satisfactory resources, but have, nevertheless, been nurtured, sustained, and enlivened by an irrepressible passion for education. The book provides a brief history of HBCs; discusses the characteristics commonly found in HBCs; and examines the mission, spirit, and promise that have been the cornerstone of HBCs' educational efforts, namely, to provide, encourage, and accelerate higher education for African Americans, while incubating and preserving black creativity and scholarship. Additionally examined is the question of the present condition of HBCs and their future in light of the national goal for total integration and the extent to which it has been achieved. Finally, a brief discussion is presented concerning the fact that non-African Americans are now attending the HBCs in increasing numbers and what this says about accommodating diversity in higher education within the United States. (GLR)

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Historically Black Colleges
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

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Albert N. Whiting
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Guardians of the Flame:
Historically Black Colleges Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

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American Association of State Colleges and Universities

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Introduction

It is sad to witness institutional ambivalence in the midst of threatening change. It is sad to have forced on the historical spirit of an institution a persistent dampening or curbing of its force and influence. It is sad, finally, to observe the fusion of hope and despair in varying operational formulas and prescriptions for the future. All of these concerns pervade the following historically structured but subjectively detailed account of what has been called, in federal government parlance, HBCUs or "historically black colleges and universities." In this text I will use the designation historically black colleges (HBCs). This term is also meant to distinguish from those institutions such as Chicago State, City College of New York, and the College of New Rochelle (N.Y.), to name a few that are currently but were not originally predominantly black.

During approximately eighteen months in 1984-86 I collected in-depth, taped interviews of one to two hours in length with twenty presidents and presidents emeriti. Among the group were five who served during 1930-54, ten who were in office sometime during 1954-70, and five serving from the 1970s through the 1980s. All but one of the latter are still in office. This mix of presidents represents eight private institutions and twelve publics. (Three of the interviewees had served in both public and private schools). At the time of the interviews, nine from the two later periods were still in office, and the remainder were still active in higher education affairs. Since then, however, four are now deceased.

I'm attempting herein to portray African American higher education as seen through the eyes of these presidents. I hope to develop a kaleidoscopic overview, charting,

as far as possible, basic changes in the character and circumstances of HBCs from 1930 to the present—or from the period of segregation, through the period of the legalization and monitoring of desegregation, to the present period of more widely accepted desegregation. At the end of this account I've added a brief examination of desegregation in reverse (i.e., movement from majority to minority institutions) and presented some rather surprising figures that seem to have escaped the attention of the national education community. I close with an effort to identify the long-range significance of this trend.

It should also be noted that because I spent seventeen years as chancellor of an HBC and, all together, forty-two years in such institutions, my personal experiences and assessments occasionally creep into the text, in most instances confirming and/or extending the descriptions and thoughts of colleague presidents. My years in office spanned the 1970s-80s. I retired in 1983.

This book chronicles a unique phenomenon: a group of institutions created by the American racial system. As such, HBCs were outside the established, accepted educational structure, inadequately financed and staffed, without satisfactory resources but nevertheless nurtured, sustained, and enlivened by an irrepressible passion for education. Among their constituents are those having this passion, which I have referred to herein as "The Flame." Will this same "fervor for service" now be generally cultivated and utilized for the underserved as in the past, or will this type of institution become a relic of the past—a vanishing symbol of a valiant struggle for knowledge outside the mainstream?

1 The Flame: A Passion for Education

From the days before freedom, Negro slaves in the United States sought literacy and education as a channel through which to better their condition of life. Occasionally this drive, according to some data, coincided with the needs of slave owners to have slave workers who could count, read, and write in order to take responsibility for the care and storage of the plantation products. Informal, surreptitious collusion between slave and owner developed to accomplish this goal because education was forbidden by "slave laws." From this kind of symbiotic accommodation and learning opportunity it was not a far step to underground communication, underground education and, in due time, slave insurrections. Add to this the sympathy, after the Civil War, among religious and missionary groups for the plight of the ignorant masses of freed people and the determination to alleviate the problem through educational endeavor; such are the sparks that ignited into a twentieth-century flame. Early efforts by the American Missionary Association and the Freedmen's Bureau led to the establishment of educational seedbeds now known as Howard, Fisk, and Atlanta-Clark Universities. The drive for education started even earlier in several Northern states with the formation by the Presbyterians of Lincoln University (Pa.); by the Quakers of Cheyney State University (Pa.); by the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Wilberforce University (Ohio) as the African American population—both free and freed—migrated to these regions.

As "The Flame" grew in intensity and as the areas of illumination broadened, education and learning at any cost

became a driving force—a passion, if you will—rooted in both the missionary zeal of the Northerners who migrated South to rescue the former slaves and their descendants and in the conviction of the freed slaves (justified or not) that higher education was, in the early days, the single most effective path to an "expanded" life and upward mobility.

This passion was reflected in the numerous tales of sacrifice and unswerving determination as many pursued education at all levels. Stories abound about classes in railroad boxcars, about speakers and choral groups traveling the nation and the world to raise funds for buildings, such as the famous Jubilee singers of Fisk University (Tenn.), who brought back from their trips toward the last quarter of the nineteenth-century enough money to build a large structure appropriately named Jubilee Hall, which has been in continuous use until this very moment. By the turn of the century, significant and visible results were evident from a combination of such efforts, and according to most records, there were thirty-four institutions by 1900 providing either some level of college work or complete degree programs and some 2,000 graduates.[1]

In a period of merely thirty-five years (1865-1900)—the period of transition to freedom—Negroes, inspired by "The Flame," accomplished within one generation a spirit of hope, optimism, and upreach. To me, this was a miracle. The journey from penniless slavery, from the degraded status of chattel, and from an oppressed and damaged mind and soul to a free, self-respecting human being was one of incomparably, unshackling and traumatic apprehension. To have weathered it alone was remarkable to say the least but, in addition, to have persevered in the face of orchestrated hostility from Southern whites and Southern state governments reflects a historically unrecognized "dimension of divinity." This quality or esprit undoubtedly constituted, once ignited, the energy and force of "The Flame."

There are many illustrations of this spirit, and I am quick to acknowledge that those widely discussed could be labeled exceptional. I turn to an unknown saga typical of the numerous upwardly mobile families that emerged out of the period of slavery. Both the man and the woman founding this family were slaves, freed as children but old enough to recall the bitter memories. One result of the experience was an uncompromising determination on the part of Jerry, as he was called, never to work again for white folks. Somehow or other he settled in a small town in southwestern Virginia and earned a living, uneducated though he was, operating a drayage business. Both he and his wife, fortunately, could read, write, and cipher, although only at an elementary level. Despite their handicaps, Jerry and Luvenia, his wife, prospered as they reared a big family. Believing strongly in the efficacy of education, they sent all six of their children to the burgeoning "Negro" colleges of that period. Two of their sons became physicians, having graduated from Howard University undergraduate school and the medical college. The third son graduated from Hampton Institute, and all three daughters pursued normal school training and careers in elementary school teaching.

This second-generation group produced twenty-six children—all college educated—including three lawyers, four physicians, several businessmen, and a number of teachers including two Ph.D.s. To date, the third generation has produced three physicians, five lawyers, one paralegal, and two Ph.D. degrees—one in romance languages and one in public relations and journalism.

In addition, members of this family were instrumental in the establishment of a bank, a hospital, a drugstore, a service station, and a real estate firm, all in the base city, and over and above their professional services. Few American families can equal or top this record of achievement—a story I know well because I married one of the third-generation

children of the original Jerry Luck family of Danville, Virginia, several of whom reside, work, and serve in that community to this day.

Records of this nature can be duplicated and should be widely published so that the nation can acquire strategic knowledge about black contributions to American society and culture; about the future potential of this minority resource; about the institutions that shepherded this minority development; and about the *elan vital* that fueled, inspired, and sustained the elevation of African Americans. To the best of my knowledge, there is no group in modern times that has climbed the socioeconomic ladder from point minus zero to today's status so quickly, so effectively, so determinedly against unconscionable odds deliberately erected and easily directed and implemented against the group because of its high visibility of color.

Earlier reference was made to thirty-four institutions that developed between 1865 and 1900. Their role and contributions to the edification of African American life have been crucial because it was through them that "The Flame" was fanned, brightened, and enriched. The current slogan of the United Negro College Fund, "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste," epitomized the historic aspiration and yearning of this group and in a sense is a contemporary, sloganized expression of "The Flame."

What about these institutions? What were they like? How were they led? How were they financed, and what was their academic standing? And, finally, because there is a crescendo of opinion today that , in essence, questions the need for their continued existence in a presumably integrated society, are they, in reality, obsolete, institutional relics?

Through the years their number grew to become, at the height, 115, but because of a disproportionate shifting of their students to the traditionally white colleges during the 1970s and '80s, a few sustained such a severe loss of enrollment and

funds that the number today is only ninety-nine. The important role they played from their early beginnings to today was rather aptly stated in an interview I had with Frederic Patterson, the late former president of Tuskegee Institute, when he described them as "boardwalks of opportunity." In a similar interview the late president of Allen University, Howard Wright, said these institutions have been "the savior and basic force around which black progress has been made . . . the essence of development for blacks." Still another president, the late Luna Mishoe of Delaware State College, remarked as follows: "A student feels free, a type of freedom in the HBCs, that he doesn't feel in some of the other institutions. One has to be in an environment where you *feel right* before you actually get into the learning process, and I think HBCs do a good job of meeting students where they are and keeping them feeling that they are somebody—keeping them feeling motivated and feeling that they can make it."

The power, role, and impact of education are exemplified in an ironic sense by Mississippi Senator James K. Vardaman's critical assertion that education was "ruining Negroes," *even leading them to demand equality!* He complained that Northern efforts to assist the freedmen and their descendants by granting funds to educational endeavors was not just a case of sending money to the South, but dynamite as well.[2]

Many of the early leaders of these colleges were white missionaries, occasionally women, who emphasized the classics, liberal arts, discipline, refinement, and, among some, a Booker T. Washington style of practicality—especially for women students and the well-known Spelman College for Women, which stressed home economics. The African American presidents of the early days (almost all men) were stern administrators and cautious politicians who viewed the institutions they headed as personal fiefdoms. They made the rules. Their personal views shaped and styled the educa-

tional thrusts. They hired and fired the faculties and staffs at will. Conditions of employment reflected the whims and caprices of the president, and discipline and presidential oversight were unbelievably rigid. The latter extended even to faculty and staff off-campus behavior. On this I speak from personal experience as a young faculty member on several of these campuses during the '30s and '40s. In return for obedience to the restrictions of segregation, the power structures overlooked (and perhaps even encouraged) dictatorial institutional leadership. The late Fred Patterson of Tuskegee commented, "We and persons like myself who came into the presidency at that time [i.e., 1935] operated under a rule that talked democracy but didn't practice it very much. The president was pretty much of a monarch. Most of the trustees were people of wealth who gave sparingly and didn't contest the way the school was run. They were willing to put almost too much trust and authority in the hands of the president. I realized that while I was at Tuskegee."

Despite this less-than-panegyrical assessment, it should be quickly noted that these leaders were effectivé in keeping desperately poor, struggling institutions alive and operating. To do this it was imperative, especially in the privately supported institutions, to spend an inordinate amount of time "on the road" raising money. In the publicly supported schools, although the fund-raising burden was a little lighter, efforts to eke out even minimal funding from reluctant state sources unconvinced of the need for so much as a semblance of quality education for "Negroes" was a great psychic drain exacerbated by the need for dissembling tactics and strategies. I recall the story (possibly apocryphal) about one president being questioned in an appropriations committee hearing in the state legislature about how his basketball players had acquired such expertise at dribbling the ball. He responded that there were so many pails on the basketball court to catch ceiling leaks in the gymnasium that avoiding them

led to athletic skill. As the story goes, his request for roof repairs was approved. This is but a sample of the political artfulness of these leaders.

Still another state college president of that period thwarted the intent of segregation by espousing it but craftily pointing out that maintaining it was costly and therefore required a high budget. Needless to say, he was eminently successful in securing state funds for his campus.

Perhaps the best known of the early presidents was Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute (Ala.), who was its founder. Many references are made to his very successful tenure and his administrative craftiness and strategic guile. The following description illustrates:

> *Booker T. Washington knew how to get the white man's money because he knew how to play to the white man's vanity. He'd tell the white industrialist, "I'm training the students at Tuskegee to be efficient, skillful craftsmen. A trained worker is an asset to you. He's better than an illiterate worker to whom you have to read and explain everything." A lot of white contributors to Tuskegee were very much surprised to learn that Tuskegee was also teaching tough courses in chemistry, physics and history. The white people thought Booker T's college was teaching Negroes simply how to be better servants. In the long run he was teaching how to be free. And he was using the white man's money to do it."*[3]

Similar stories abound. These men went to great lengths to protect the educational opportunities their institutions offered African Americans when other alternatives were simply not available. Without these schools the fortune of the black minority in the United States would have been indescribably bleak, and the fortune of the nation

less satisfying. Although these early education leaders were for the most part not highly trained or accomplished professionals, they were wily operators deeply committed to the idea that the uses of freedom require education. They were the products of the flame and viewed themselves as its guardians. The responsibility was a personal stewardship.

As these men departed from the scene, a new type of president emerged: more highly educated, more managerially sophisticated, somewhat more inclined to give at least lip service to collegial principles. These leaders appeared during the mid-'40s to the early '60s. Such men as David Jones at Bennett College, Rufus Clement at Atlanta University, Benjamin Mays at Morehouse College, Albert Manley at Spelman College, Luther Foster at Tuskegee Institute, and Alphonso Elder at North Carolina Central University were viewed during this period as highly successful presidents with excellent, popular, and expanding programs. They were dedicated, hard-working leaders who saw themselves as pivotal cogs in African American higher education and effective liaisons between the black and white educational communities. Like corporate leaders, they spoke with authority about and for their institutions and enjoyed the status of "experts" in the United States on the education of their people.

Gradually, as the end of segregation loomed, many of them, especially from the better-known institutions, were invited to serve on education association committees and boards to reflect the minority view. They did this well and, as spokesmen for the black minority, evidenced a fervor and enthusiasm for what their schools had and were accomplishing. They still viewed their school, as had the early leaders, as the major opportunity channel for black youth. They sold higher education with exciting vigor and presented themselves as models of what could be achieved. Perhaps, unfortunately, they too often tended to assume that they and their schools were identical—that they embodied their institution.

No doubt this tendency stemmed from their historic conviction that they were the guardians of the flame, an impulse toward enlightment and education that would enable the benefits of freedom to be energized, focused, and multiplied. They ardently viewed their schools as "the boardwalks of opportunity" (especially in the days of segregation).[4]

Because of their almost total identification with and immersion in the welfare of their institutions, they tended to assume a kind of operational omnipotence that, despite their enthusiasm, militated against institutional development. For example, many presidents undertook to do too much. One common story about Alabama State College in those days was that H. Council Trenholm, the president, personally registered every student and made all significant decisions, administrative and academic. Many of the schools had no academic deans and no faculty organizations. Albert Manley stated to me in an interview, describing his tenure as president of Spelman, "When I went there, the president acted not only as the chief executive officer but also as the dean of the college." This was as late as 1953.

One other illustration should be noted. When I was a faculty member at Atlanta University's graduate school, President Rufus Clement typically held no more than two faculty meetings during the academic year: the first, at the opening of school, at which time the faculty was greeted by the president and new members introduced; the second, at the end of the year, for the purpose of voting on degree candidates. In my recollection, incidentally, no meeting ever lasted beyond twenty minutes. Interestingly, the president stood at the door of the meeting room, watch in hand, so that the door could be closed at the announced time of the meeting.

These examples may be considered extreme but are nevertheless true. The intent here is not to criticize or to ridicule but rather to emphasize how intimately involved

these leaders were with their schools because of a desire to make their institutions personifications of their feelings, ambitions, and goals for their people.

In the late '60s through the '80s, far-reaching changes were underway not only in the nature of leadership but also in the direction of commitment. Although the presidents and chancellors of this period were no less devoted to the idea of the efficacy of education as a vehicle of upward mobility and self-fulfillment, they nevertheless were no longer single-minded about the role of their institutions in sustaining and upgrading the race. The climate was changing as the process of desegregation expanded and accelerated. The group drive for education had not diminished, but more and more African American students were taking advantage of the new and broader opportunities for higher education experiences in majority group institutions. Consequently, there was a disproportionate shifting of students from the traditional minority schools. It started first with the top echelon group and then filtered gradually to the mid-level groups. As of this writing, approximately 80 percent of black students have migrated to the majority schools, which is almost the exact opposite distribution of 15-20 years ago.

Consequently the presidents of this period were (or are) faced with a survival problem and the attendant vexations of declining enrollments and budgets. In the face of these trends, they were confronted with a curious dilemma. They could neither encourage nor discourage the student shift. They took solace in the hope that the shift would reverse as the traditionally white institutions evidenced inhospitality. Tales from the latter campuses suggested that their hope might have had some validity, but reality proved the opposite. Therefore, saving their schools became their main preoccupation because they believed that access had to be maintained and broadened for the benefit of the many black youth who would still be the first in their families to go to college as

well as those educationally deprived whose secondary school performance and skills did not qualify them for traditional college admission. The flame was still bright and their commitment to it as strong as in the past. They felt particularly that black colleges could do a better job preparing students for productive citizenship and satisfying lives. The comments below, from the presidents of Lincoln University and Morehouse College, are typical:

> *As far as I can say . . . my mission has not changed since I started teaching at Howard in 1942 . . . and that mission is very simple. We have a group of people in America who have been horribly mistreated—black people—and the job is for some of us to give our very best efforts to aid them in trying to understand the system and then to gain the intellectual skills and social skills to become contributing members of that society, and that is what we want to do.*

> *If we do not . . . have programs which lead to blacks going up the ladder and getting this training, blacks getting more bachelor's degrees, more advanced degrees, and things like that . . . then the program is not a good one. . . . When people start telling me some foolishness about . . . only wanting people who are "very good," it is elitism of the very worst kind, and it's misleading because all of us know that it is foolishness. The psychometric instruments which they use to discriminate are unfortunate and tragic and should be battled against. . . .*

> *I think the historically black college is very necessary. The black student has a friend in the black college that he does not have in the predominantly white institution. . . . Many black students are more comfortable in*

the black college. . . . A black college breeds confidence in the black students . . . to the point where they are able to compete successfully in graduate and professional schools. . . . A big advantage is that the black school focuses on racial background and problems of black students. . . . All this adds up to—a black college is generally more caring.

We are in a situation in which there is a heavy outflow of black students into the white schools and a very limited inflow of white students into black institutions. That plus inflation, unemployment, etc. have caused considerable problems.

The peculiar problems and handicaps are not facing all of our colleges, but they are facing most of them.

While the struggle for the continued existence of the traditionally black colleges goes on, the presidents (chancellors) remain the "Guardians of The Flame" even as alternative opportunities emerge. They espouse the indispensability of their institutions as a national resource with special aptitude for educating students who are culturally and educationally deprived; but, in public schools particularly, they are also beginning to recognize the logistical and cost advantages that make their institutions attractive to students of other races. To some, emphasizing these latter advantages has been considered disloyal to the aspirations and progress of the race. However, such critics operate from the perspective of segregationism. The irreversible changes that have occurred, however, dictate a new view for a new era; otherwise, these educational institutions that have served as bridges into a wider society will fade into extinction.

2 A Brief History of the Historically Black Colleges

Because of the enforcement of segregation in the South, higher education institutions for African Americans were founded and developed outside the national system of education—a condition unlike that of other colleges and universities. Therefore, their mission and goals were never broad-gauged or interrelated with the community economic and political processes. In fact, they were the victims of almost complete ostracism. Furthermore, the students at all but four of these institutions were receiving their education in the region most prone to denying them their civil liberties. Consequently, the task for the HBCs was monumental, to say the least, and to have persisted and thriven as they did in an environment almost completely devoid of the larger cultural enrichment opportunities is a marvel.

An awareness of this formidable sociopsychological backdrop should help the reader gain a deeper appreciation not only of the uniqueness of the HBCs but also of the tremendous obstacles they faced. With such a perspective, one can better understand the important social purpose the colleges have served in the lives of their people as well as what these institutions have been and are today.

Earl McGrath, in a study of black colleges done in the '60s, generalized as follows: HBCs (1) arose to serve a disadvantaged group in American society, as a result of which (2) they have had to devote much of their effort to remedial work and (3) in the past have had to limit the curricular emphases to a few utilitarian and vocational ends.[5] Thus to evaluate them in terms of selected academic standards only (i.e.,

teaching degrees, library volumes, etc.) rather than some broader effectiveness measures is to ignore the developmental thrusts they of necessity had to achieve.

Overlaying the development of the black colleges was a great debate on the issue of whether training in the industrial arts or liberal arts represented the proper form of education for their students. In the Southern white community, interested businessmen and philanthropists leaned toward the idea of educating black students in industrial skills. Having a trained labor force would be mutually beneficial to both racial communities and at the same time would not measurably disturb the caste system. In effect, this type of education would be another device—along with segregation laws, disenfranchisement, violence, and economic control—to keep the "Negro" community in its place. Northern whites acceded to this idea for the most part and, therefore, philanthropic contributions were funneled to African American education in the South with the understanding that the money would be used for training in industrial arts. (It should be noted that a large part of these funds was channeled through organizations and personnel approved by the white South.[6])

The outstanding proponent for agricultural and industrial education in the black community was Booker T. Washington. He viewed such education as the means by which the black masses would be able to develop an economically viable status in the Southern socioeconomic system and utilize it as a base for achieving political rights and upward social mobility.

For the opposing position the principal spokesman was W.E.B. DuBois of Atlanta University (Ga.), who advocated a liberal arts education for what he referred to as the "talented tenth." While not totally opposed to agricultural and industrial education, because he thought many students could benefit from it and learn the dignity of work, he abhorred its

"accommodationist context."[7] He believed strongly that to be freed from the crippling mental and emotional by-products of slavery and the biracial caste system, African Americans required leaders having a liberating literacy, a knowledge of the world (beyond the United States) and of the relation of man to the cosmos. DuBois believed the goal of education was to build manhood rather than train people merely to become money-makers.[8]

Despite the cogency of DuBois's arguments and the intellectual respect accorded him because of Booker T. Washington's wide influence and power in both black and white communities, philanthropy generally directed its funds into agricultural and industrial education. In order to attract funds, therefore, both secondary and postsecondary institutions generally included, either in their titles or descriptive literature, references to agricultural and/or industrial programs. Colleges that were predominantly liberal arts oriented succumbed likewise by adding trades and/or homemaking courses in their curricula.

Although this debate has been described as an either-or, some academic leaders saw the emphasis on polar extremes as a misleading and false issue. This line of thought is well-represented in statements made by Dean Kelly Miller of Howard University (D.C.) early in the twentieth century when he described the debate as a futile attempt to ascertain "which is of greater importance to man, air or water." He labeled the partisans of either side as "one-eyed enthusiasts [lacking] binocular vision." He asserted, with commonsensical insight, that "the two forms of training should be considered on their relative, not rival, claims." Despite the increasing number of supporters for Miller's position, the debate persisted and reportedly was the primary issue in the controversy over the transformation of Hampton Institute in the 1920s from a normal school to a college. In the 1950s, when Hampton discarded the industrial education cloak, declar-

ing itself a liberal arts institution, many of its alumni and supporters viewed the event as an occasion for nostalgic remorse and critical questioning.[9]

The debate was finally and definitively resolved not through rhetoric but rather socioeconomics. Despite the funds funneled into industrial and agricultural programs, concrete results were relatively minimal because the skills taught (e.g., mattress making, blacksmithing, laundering, broom making) became obsolete after the emergence of factory production and related technology. In addition, whites were rapidly displacing blacks in such trades as carpentry, brickmasonry, tailoring, and painting. Because of the biracial caste system, blacks were generally excluded from skilled manufacturing jobs or unable to qualify for them because of the inadequacy and obsolescence of their industrial arts training. Those trained in the industrial arts institutes and land-grant colleges had to seek other opportunities. Like the liberal-arts-oriented institutions, these schools resorted mostly to teacher training as the main academic activity, thus marking the end of an era.

At least seven relatively well-known schools were established by the American Missionary Association: Atlanta University (Ga.) (now merged with its neighbor Clark College and referred to as Clark-Atlanta University) founded in 1865; Fisk University (Tenn.) in 1866; Talladega College (Ala.) in 1867; Hampton University (Va.) in 1868; Tougaloo College (Miss.) in 1869; LeMoyne-Owen College (Tenn.) in 1870; and Howard University (D.C.) in 1867 (as part of a relationship with the Congregationalist Church).

Five institutions were initiated by the American Baptist Home Mission Society: Virginia Union University, 1865; Shaw University (N.C.), 1865; Morehouse College (Ga.) (Atlanta Baptist College), 1867; Benedict College (S.C.), 1870; Spelman College (Ga.), 1881. Eventually most of these schools shifted to the control of black Baptist conventions.

Seven colleges owe their existence to the so-called Northern Methodists: Meharry Medical College (Tenn.), 1865; Morgan State College (now University) (Md.), 1866; Rust College (Miss.) 1867; Claflin College (S.C.), 1869; Clark College (Ga.), 1870; Bennett College (N.C.), 1873; and Wiley College (Tex.) 1873.

The Southern Methodist division established one college: Paine (Ga.) in 1884. The Episcopalians founded two: St. Augustine's College (N.C.) in 1867 and St. Paul's Polytechnic Institute (now St. Paul's College) in 1882. And the Presbyterians established four institutions: Johnson C. Smith University (N.C.) in 1867; Barber Scotia College (N.C.) in 1867; Fort Valley State College (Ga) in 1895; and Knoxville College (Tenn.) in 1875.

All of the above schools—a total of twenty-six colleges in ten Southern states and the District of Columbia ranging from Maryland to Mississippi and Texas—were founded by white church and/or missionary societies. Black church groups and individuals made significant contributions in the founding of thirteen institutions. The African Methodist Episcopal Church established Wilberforce University in Ohio during the Civil War period; Paul Quinn College (Tex.) and Allen University (S.C.), 1881; Shorter College (Ga.), 1873; Morris Brown College (Ga.), 1885; Kittrell College (N.C.), 1886 (now closed); Edward Waters College (Fla.), 1886. In addition, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church started Livingston College (N.C.) in 1879, and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church organized Lane College (Tenn.) in 1870 and assisted the Southern White Methodist group in operating Miles Memorial College (Ala.) and Paine College (mentioned earlier). With these schools one more state was added—Florida—so that by 1900 there were higher education institutions for blacks in eleven southern states and, according to some records, two Northern states—Ohio (already men-

tioned, with Wilberforce) and Pennsylvania (Cheyney and Lincoln).

A final group of private colleges resulted from the efforts and initiatives of single individuals. The most notable of these, of course, was Tuskegee Institute, established in 1881 by the influential Booker T. Washington. In addition, Livingston College (N.C.) was founded in 1879 by Joseph C. Price, about whom relatively little is known because he died, according to records, at age thirty-nine. In 1910 James E. Shepard started what is now known as North Carolina Central University in Durham. Bethune-Cookman College (Fla.) completes this group and represents the only institution founded by a woman, Mary McLeod Bethune. It developed out of a normal school for girls started in 1904 by Bethune and later merged with the Cookman Institute for Boys, originally located in Jacksonville, Florida. Other African American women did establish schools, such as Lucy Laney [Haines Normal and Industrial School (Ga.), 1886] and Charlotte Hawkins Brown (Palmer Memorial Institute (N.C.), 1904), but their institutions never evolved into postsecondary schools or offered postsecondary-level courses.

Between the end of the Civil War and 1900, several state-financed colleges for black were also established largely under the provisions of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. It should be noted, however, that the Act of 1862 led to the creation of only one such school—Alcorn College, 1871, (Miss.)—by and large because no allowance was made for a division of funds along racial lines. Two other states—Virginia and South Carolina—designated private schools (Hampton and Claflin) as land-grant institutions, a status meriting federal funds. Following the Morrill Act of 1890, seventeen states designated additional black institutions as land-grant colleges by the end of 1892. As a result, the two private institutions mentioned above were succeeded by state-sup-

ported institutions: Virginia State College and South Carolina A&M.[10]

Most of the black colleges founded under the aegis of private auspices either began as high schools or included in their offerings high school level courses and only slowly evolved to college status.[11] In 1915, for example, a federal report on black schools listed only three as "college grade": Howard, Meharry, and Fisk. Thirty other schools offered some college-level work but were not described as "college-grade" because of the size of their high school departments. All of the institutions offering some college work were private except two: one land-grant and one state-financed.

A follow-up study in 1927 reported that many of the above had phased out their high school departments as public secondary opportunities improved for blacks, leaving them free to concentrate on college-level offerings. By this time there were seventy-seven institutions offering collegiate work, an increase of forty-four over the number indicated in the 1915 study, stemming primarily from the emergence of the black college public sector.

A third federal survey in 1942 indicated vast improvement in black colleges, to the point where offerings in the public black and white colleges were fairly comparable. There was, however, a disparity in graduate-level offerings; the black schools generally did not exhibit interest in them until 1935, when the "separate but equal" doctrine was challenged because of the lack of public graduate and professional school opportunities for blacks in states with dual systems of education. Immediately afterward in 1936, six black private schools organized graduate programs. During this period, states with dual systems made funds available for African Americans to take up graduate or professional studies out of state. For obvious reasons, such arrangements were never adequate as a means of facilitating access and opportunity.

After World War II, as a result of the GI Bill, veterans flocked to the campuses of the nation. In the black schools they made up over one-third of the enrollment, and their presence continued in significant proportions through the 1960s.

In 1965, the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision declared "separate educational facilities inherently unequal," which precipitated a new era in higher education in the United States with the attendant desegregation. Prior to this declaration, black colleges had about 75,000 undergraduate students and roughly 3,200 graduate students. For some time after this decision, black students continued to attend the historically black institutions at about the same rate as before. Gradually, however, a disproportionate shifting of black students occurred, especially following the NAACP class action suit known now as the Adams Case (1970). As of this writing, approximately 80 percent of all black students in college courses are now in predominantly white institutions, marking a wrenching transition in the role and function of the HBCs and a serious threat to the survival of many.

3 Characteristics of the HBCs

Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the traditionally black schools is that they are, for the most part, small. The average overall student enrollment is approximately 1,600, generally ranging from 400-4,000, although with several exceptions such as Howard University and Southern University (7,000-12,000) and a few others such as North Carolina A&T, North Carolina Central, Jackson State, Florida A&M, Norfolk State, and Texas Southern (5,000-7,000). Because of this relatively small size, personal relationships between students and faculty, students and staff, students and administrators have been more the norm. As a result, a special hallmark emerged: an emphasis on the personalized "caring" and "nurturing" of students. In a wide-ranging interview I had with Willa Player, president of Bennett College in the '50s and '60s, she described this rather unusual feature as follows:

> *In the first place, these colleges emerged out of the necessity for educating the newly emancipated slaves and were mostly church related in origin, and that church relationship matched the thrust of the church, which was preaching the dignity of the individual and the fact that the individual was a child of God. So that caring function that's being talked about so much today was a part of the origin of the black college, and many of them had in their statements of purpose quotations from the Bible. . . . What was very moving was the fact that everybody was treated as an individual of worth, and this was a concept lacking among Negro people and that, in itself, was a continuing*

commitment in the black college. They were the only colleges interested in preserving this kind of image.

Espousing another point of view, Albert Manley, president of Spelman College from 1953-76, states:

One of the most important contributions that the historically black colleges have made to education is to take low-performing and deprived students and to actually demonstrate that they care about them, that they really want to help them, and I think that that is the major difference even today [in the experience of the black students] who still attend the historically black school . . . as compared with those . . . who have been integrated into historically white institutions.

Warren Morgan, president of Paul Quinn College, translates the caring, nurturing function into a criterion for a "good teacher":

A good teacher is really a caring, mentoring kind of person who is prepared to take that extra time and to work with students, and I think that is the primary function of teaching. I think also that is what we primarily ought to measure effectiveness by. The other things that come along such as research and publishing are all important, but they certainly should not rank anywhere close to teaching on a small, undergraduate campus like ours.

Another generally shared characteristic of these institutions has been financial marginality. Almost without exception, the HBCs, both private and public, have depended for the larger part of their annual operating budgets on student tuition and fees. No such institution even to this day

has had a significant endowment. Hampton University (Va.), the most richly endowed at the moment, has a fund of approximately $75 million, and two or three schools are in the $30-40 million category. All others are considerably below this level and probably would not average much beyond the $3-8 million level; so endowment income at such institutions would not constitute a significant budget component.

The same generally would apply to gift and grant income. During my tenure as a president (chancellor), it was monumental news when a "Negro" college received a $1 million gift. Prior to the 1960s-80s, according to my information, not a single institution had ever recorded a gift of this size. Most recently, however, Bill Cosby, the actor and producer, and his wife donated $20 million to Spelman College—not only the largest gift by far ever given to a historically black college, but also a highly dramatic breakthrough in giving by and for blacks.

The significance of such a gift cannot be exaggerated and may well represent an awakening or stimulus to a sense of racial responsibility in support of black educational institutions. The lack of black giving to black higher education has been an acute group failing and a source of embarrassment through the years. It is rather dramatically highlighted in a statement made by the late Wade Wilson, former president of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania from the late 1960s-80s:

> *There are 114 black colleges. . . . There are at least 5,000 black churches in this nation. It might be possible for a cadre of churches to adopt our schools and to pour money into them. We've got to find ways and means to get our businesses to adopt and pour money into schools. We've got to . . . work our ways and means so that those of us who have money must be willing and must make investments in black enterprises. I'll take Philadelphia for example. One basketball player on the*

"Sixers" has a reputed salary of $2 million, and if he gave $500,000 of that to a cadre of black colleges, his net take-home pay would not be changed much.

Because of limited resources and facilities, HBCs rarely qualify for major research and/or government grants (with, perhaps, the exception of Howard University). Therefore, these schools have understandably been constricted in growth, vision, and talent and therefore limited in outreach and educational influence.

Alumni support in the early days and up to the '60s was almost nonexistent, largely because black people were primarily of low income. However, there were other reasons, too, as conveyed in an interview by the late Fred Patterson, founder of the United Negro College Fund:

There was a time . . . when we realized that our funding would have to come from outside of the South predominantly, not only because the South did not have the money (of course, there were exceptions) but it was not the place "to start a fund-raising program." In the cities where blacks were represented in significant numbers they often did not want to admit that they were from our schools. I remember one conversation I had with a wealthy white businessman in the South who said, "You know, the South has a psychology of poverty. . . . Even if a man has a lot of money, he associates his wealth with the poverty of the region and he doesn't feel like giving." Well, I found that in our alumni we did everything for them. They came in, our tuition was low, sometimes they didn't pay anything and often they worked their way through. That produced a psychology of depending on what the college was able to get from other sources, and they felt that with their meager resources they were not needed. . . .

> *I would say now that our alumni are doing much better.*

Patterson went on to say in this interview that part of the problem with the alumni giving also stemmed from the fact that the HBCs failed to educate and stimulate their students to embrace a sense of stewardship for their schools. As late as 1967, I found, as a new president, that my college did not have an alumni officer, a fund-raising program, or even an officially recognized alumni group. The modest funds raised, through local groups and an unchartered national alumni group, were used largely to support homecoming activities sponsored by this group. From inquiries made among our administration I learned that my predecessors did not encourage recognition of any alumni body, in order to forestall alumni interference in institutional affairs. After having instigated an institutionally recognized and staffed alumni organization, I later came to understand the apprehension, real or imagined. In retrospect, though, I think this course of action was not only proper but necessary to the well-being of the institution and its maturity.

Establishing a balanced approach, however, even though risky in terms of maintaining and/or establishing positive support, is administratively appropriate. Equivocation and political maneuvering can lead to disastrous consequences because many alumni of black colleges seem to feel that their advisory and support roles should involve consultation on daily operations. Their lack of power in other settings has historically left the churches, schools, and lodges as their major political arenas. The president of a Maryland state university describes this problem perhaps as adequately as any during my interview with him in the mid-1980s:

> *Our alumni have been extremely active; in fact the honest truth is that perhaps they have been too active.*

When I arrived . . . I literally had alumni coming in telling me what my job was and what it wasn't. And I had to take a very strong position at the outset—at some risk—to remind . . . them that they did not run the college on a day-to-day basis and that they were not the ones held accountable for the administration of the college. It upset some people, but I came into a situation where the effort to involve alumni almost backfired and the alumni went to the extreme. When members of the alumni association feel that they can go to the executive director of the system and talk about day-to-day affairs of the college and what they like and don't like; when they feel that they can come on the campus and walk into faculty meetings and . . . classes, it had really gotten out of hand at that point. . . . I had to take a very strong position against that kind of thing. But once we went through that, we've now backed-up, and we do involve our alumni in all matters related to the college. They are on our foundation board, . . . the board of visitors, the board of trustees that governs our system. We invite members of the association on campus. We work with them in student recruitment. We talk to them about our image. So they are very much involved, but we had initially . . . to clarify the role because some of them had gotten to the point where they felt they were part of the governance structure.

Some may say that the HBC is no different in alumni relations from majority group institutions. However, majority group alumni seem to have a deeper sense of responsibility for financial support for their institutions, probably because they are better organized for such purposes and therefore more systematically sensitized to this function. This tends to energize administrations to seek ways of involving alumni, in a directed manner, in institutional affairs—per-

haps frequently with the intent to garner larger and larger gifts but also with an expanded sense of tolerance for alumni "interest" in the affairs of the school. The basis for this kind of administrative motivation in the HBC has been generally and historically absent.

Still another characteristic more or less typical of HBCs is the fact that their boards of trustees have been relatively remote bodies. This was (and is) especially true at private institutions. The general pattern involved a meeting once or twice a year, most often in a city some distance away from the campus. Patterson (Tuskegee) expressed this point as follows:

> *The trustees—most of them were people of wealth who gave sparingly and didn't pay too much attention as long as they didn't have any problems emanating from the way the school was run. They were willing to really almost put too much trust and authority in the hands of the president.*

Player (Bennett) supported this general view of the trustees in a more detailed statement:

> *The trustees were much like trustee boards in any institution. They met once or twice a year. We had trustee committees. The trustees met twice a year, in October and in April. We had trustee committees like the buildings and grounds committee, the curriculum committee. . . . What we did mainly, though, with trustees was to report to them at the meetings. The trustees didn't do very much in terms of fund raising: they expected the president to do all the fund raising. But what we did was to keep the trustees informed by having students report on what went on each year at the trustee meetings, and then we always arranged a*

> *dinner where the students were hostesses. . . . So the trustees knew a great deal about what was going on, and they were very supportive.*

At one point a number of predominantly black, state-supported institutions were governed by state boards of education. Such was the case in Alabama. Much like the boards of the private schools, state boards were relatively remote in terms of active governance. President Emeritus Morrison, Alabama A&M, described this structural arrangement and its effects as follows:

> *In 1962 we were under the state board of education, and they did very little . . . to help the situation with its budget . . . or to formulate policy. . . . They said that the president was in charge. The president reported to them, and they looked to the president to run the institution, and it was better that way because everybody knew what responsibility the president had, and all the faculty and everybody else came to the president.*

The remoteness of the boards in the governance structures of the HBCs resulted largely from the fact that nearly all of the presidents were historically dictatorial and paternalistic in their administrative style. Many tales (some undoubtedly apocryphal) are told about the manner in which they exercised authority, ranging from faculty and staff terminations, to peculiar compensation patterns, to various forms of capricious intimidation.

One other characteristic of the trustees of state-supported HBCs: in situations where the schools have had individual boards and where state law required board members to be state citizens, the members selected have largely been local. In such instances the problems have been the

opposite of those involving remote boards. The former president of Morgan State University described this phenomenon:

> *One of the problems is that the trustees or regents by law have to be state citizens, and by practice they have been mostly from the city. That means they are local. That means they are in active contact with what is happening at the university. And because they are local citizens they are concerned about the school and have been, in my judgment, too accessible to faculty members, students, and staff who wanted to have access to the regents for one reason or another, and they have been too amenable to that kind of direct input. I believe that for orderly governance those matters . . . ought to come through the president to the regents. . . . This problem is likely to be more prevalent in black institutions and . . . in local institutions. For example, I think if trustees are on a national board, they would not be quite as interested in the details of the day-to-day operation. . . . In the black community we have still—after more than a hundred years of freedom—very, very little control and ownership over the major institutions or sectors of this society. We have very little in the way of what we can own and manage and control and, I think, very little opportunity . . . for upward mobility, for leadership, for status, and I think that there may be more of a tenacious clinging to what few institutions we do have to try to help them work for us, and I think maybe black people respond to their black institutions in this way.*

State boards were predominantly white, remoteness was the norm, and interest was lacking. But such was not always the case. As teaching institutions the HBCs histori-

cally tended to develop students who were not only culturally raw but, for the most part, academically underprepared. Although the faculties of these schools were, for long years, generally without advanced research training and/or doctorates, they entered the task of teaching with strong commitment and unbounded enthusiasm. The president emeritus of Spelman College commented:

> *I found a sense of commitment in terms of the way the faculty worked with the students. Most of the faculty members lived on the campus then, and they were available to the students all of the time.*

As these institutions grew and the number of doctorates on their faculties increased, changes in the level and sense of commitment began to develop, as indicated by Hugh Gloster, president of Morehouse College until 1987:

> *I think that there have been very significant changes in the faculties of the black colleges since the 1960s. . . . All of these colleges have picked up a higher percentage of Ph.D.s. For example, we have moved from 50 percent to about 70 percent during my tenure. . . . I think the great loss among faculty here is a decline in institutional commitment. Now I can compare two periods far apart—my undergraduate years at Morehouse and my years as president. . . . During my student days we didn't have a single black Ph.D. [i.e., 1930s and '40s]. So that shows how far we had to go. But Dr. John Hope [president then] had evidently done a good job in getting a committed faculty, a faculty interested in preparing students for graduate and professional schools, preparing students for positions of leadership. . . . And I think that that commitment is not as general*

as it used to be. We have a few teachers who are carrying on that tradition, but we also have a number . . . who teach their classes, have their conferences, and then flee.

Because of the heavy emphasis on teaching and the magnitude of the learning need, little time was available for research and publishing and, perhaps because of the paucity of advanced degree holders, there was little interest in such. Consequently, black institutions have never been noted for productivity in these areas. In recent years, scholarly productivity has received slightly more attention, however, particularly as black, state-supported institutions have become part of the statewide systems with centralized governance and systemwide procedures and standards.

Just as outside forces have operated to change the faculty of HBCs, so have they promoted changes in student interests and insights. In the early days the students were from predominantly rural, small-town backgrounds with relatively unsophisticated views of the world in which they lived. African Americans migrated from the South and settled in the urban North, but they sent college-age children back to the black institutions (chiefly Southern), bringing with them generally more affluence, a reduced puritanism, and a more informed view of the larger society. Because of restricted opportunities, however, these students' career aspirations focused on the ministry, teaching, and occasionally medicine or dentistry and law. These were the stand-out professions in the black community, and just about every student had some contact and experience with a representative of one or another of these often revered and respected community models. As desegregation accelerated, however, changes began to occur in student aspirations and goals in response to new exposures and widened opportunities: Willa Player (Bennett

College, '50s and '60s and later Title III director of the U.S. Department of Education) describes this process well:

> *I think students are more aware of the broad opportunity that they have now, as minorities, for service, and so they are not going into the traditional fields of teaching and preaching ministry that they used to go into. They are going into all sorts of unusual fields in our new technology. . . . I think, too, that they are more interested in work and in becoming home-owners, holders of good jobs . . . earners of large salaries. . . . I think [they] are much more competitive than they used to be.*

The impulse toward competitiveness in the larger social frame represented a decidedly new thrust stemming from the opening of society and the lessening of ethnocentrism. This type of challenge was somewhat unique to minority institutions and required changes in faculty mind-sets as well as curricular broadening. HBCs, however, have always been adaptable and resilient and, therefore, despite resource limitations at this critical period, the challenge is being met—so much so, in fact, that a special effort has to be made by most of the schools to avoid complete neglect of the more or less traditional fields.

Another general characteristic of HBCs is limited cocurricular and extracurricular activities (resulting from limited budgets). For example, few HBCs have sufficient funds, grants, or endowments to sponsor symphony concerts by top orchestras, subsidized trips abroad, lecturers of national and international stature, or specialized lecture series in various disciplines, which would enable scholars, outstanding performers, specialists in various disciplines, government leaders, authors, and sports figures to visit the

campus every year and rub shoulders with faculty and students. The absence of this type and caliber of inspiration, model, and challenge prevents the opportunity for the students and campus community generally to test their knowledge and understanding of the great issues, debates, and cultural expressions of the times. This limitation tends to reduce the intellectuality of informal campus life and the overall environmental press. At least such was my experience during a seventeen-year presidency at a state-supported institution. Without extramural funds or state-appropriated financing, these types of complementary experiences were accomplished through student activities fees, but the funds were limited—since 85-90 percent of students at HBCs have used some form of financial aid.

Most black schools tend to suffer from anonymity in the larger communities in which they are located. This lack of recognition is often described as an "image" or "town-gown" problem that can probably be traced back to the days of segregation. No matter how much money the institution contributes to the economic base of the town or municipality, few of its citizens (either majority or minority) know about the institution or can direct a stranger to the campus. Fortunately, this situation is beginning to improve as a result of greater media recognition and highway signs, but I was dumbfounded not too long ago when my wife reported to me that while driving just outside Baltimore, she was unable, after inquiring several times, to find a black passerby who knew where Morgan State University was; she was in a community less than ten miles from the institution (which was founded in 1900)!

This anonymity probably stems from several factors: first, a failure on the part of the HBCs historically to assert themselves or capitalize on their uniqueness; second, a "denial dynamic" on the part of the white community in refusing to acknowledge the personhood of a black individual.

Third, nearly all physical plants at HBCs are inadequate, and deferred maintenance is a major problem. This tends to depress the learning environment unless great emphasis is placed on lifting the learning and teaching process to a level where buildings, modernization, and out-of-date equipment are secondary. A number of HBCs have miraculously accomplished this through the creation of an intellectualizing esprit de corps and student self-propulsion. Throughout the African American community this strategy has been thought to be characteristic of, for example, such schools as Morehouse College, Fisk University, and Talladega College. Unfortunately the latter two in recent years have been in decline, but Morehouse continues as a beacon of black higher education. President Gloster at the end of his tenure said without equivocation or fear of contradiction:

> *We are a relatively strong college as compared with other colleges in the state. There are two small colleges in Georgia with chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. They are Agnes Scott and Morehouse, and we didn't get the chapter because somebody wanted to extend some good will. We had to meet very high requirements. . . . But I feel that if a black college is strong it has a better opportunity, a better chance of success in the future.*

With regard to the rather special esprit developed at Morehouse, Gloster mentioned that as a president he was

> *probably happier at Morehouse than I could have been at any other school because Morehouse is my alma mater, and I have the affection of an alumnus for this college. . . . We have a kind of brotherhood here, and if I cannot do something for the son of an alumnus, then I have betrayed a brother.*

One of the criticisms frequently leveled at HBCs is poor management. As a former president I always deeply resented this charge because, in my view, it simply is not true. Of course, there have been notable cases of such, but they are infrequent and in most instances result from inadequacies in the selection process and the tendency of HBC boards to lean toward selection of alumni as presidents without due regard for qualifications. Again, to quote Gloster:

> *I think the great mistake of many trustee boards is trying to find an alumnus who can run the school. . . . I find that selecting a well-liked alumnus is frequently a technique that is used. Well, you know, here is a man who is very personable, agreeable, and his fellow alumni like him, and these alumni are on the board, and they bring these alumni in, and I feel that you can make a big mistake there.*

Although this chapter may not have enumerated all of the characteristics and qualities of HBCs, the major distinguishing features have been described. In sum, these schools are for the most part small, financially marginal, relatively unknown, poorly equipped and housed, with poorly prepared students, and staffed by faculties with a minimum of advanced degrees. On the other hand, they also have an unusually strong commitment to teaching, undergirded by a nurturant atmosphere and a special affinity and expertise for awakening untutored minds and molding underprepared students into functioning professionals and contributing citizens. There is no greater story in American higher education.

4 Mission, Spirit, Promise

From the beginning, the purpose of the HBCs was twofold: to provide, encourage, and accelerate higher education for African Americans; and to incubate and preserve black creativity and scholarship. To fulfill this mission required humble start-ups because their constituency was woefully illiterate and almost completely detached from its cultural origins as a result of slavery. Deliberate mixing of tribal and linguistic groups and the break-up of family units effectively prevented the maintenance of even a semblance of oral tradition and/or generational folklore. Consequently, the HBCs had to serve a culturally shattered group in a bewildering, new, and brutalizing environment. The challenge ahead must have been daunting, to say the least, but the pioneering souls, both black and white, who undertook it were stalwart in determination and inspired by a spirit ("the flame") beyond the description of historical retrospection. African Americans should pause every day in thanks for the efforts of these pioneers because this development was the turning point that ultimately shaped the cultural forces, folkways, and mores of modern America. Important as the Emancipation Proclamation was, as a single event it lacked the cumulative impact of the creation of the HBCs.

Out of these schools came the African American leaders and thinkers of the twentieth century, such as Booker T. Washington, William E. B. Dubois, Charles S. Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jessie Jackson, and Thurgood Marshall, to mention but a few. Many of the presidents (past and present) of these schools time and time again mention the leadership contributions of their institutions. Another mission attrib-

uted to these schools is their role as stewards of African American interests and special points of view.

According to at least one former president, Herman Branson (now retired) of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, HBCs have carried out that mission more effectively in recent decades:

> *As a matter of fact they have been able to perform some of it only since desegregation. . . . For example, they were not able to be havens for black scholars before desegregation because they were sometimes under such political control that they could not take an unpopular black scholar into their faculty—because the white power structure would not permit it. Now they have a little more freedom and can do things like that.*

His interpretation may, of course, be at odds with the prevailing historical view. In the "Negro" academic world of segregation, one occasionally heard tales about the troubles of the more radical, more militant faculty members, but in my experience such incidents usually occurred in connection with some "militant" act or verbalization outside the campus rather than with what such faculty members taught, thought, or wrote in the pursuit of their academic tasks. In other words, it seems that Branson attributes more white power control over campus activities in those days than was actually the case. There may well have been recallable incidents but, by and large, these institutions were "safe" harbors where black scholars of all political and academic schools of thought found employment (DuBois at Atlanta University, Frasier at the same university and later at Howard, Abe Harris at Howard, etc). In all of my forty-two years in black higher education, I never heard of faculty members being summarily fired because of what they wrote or taught. However, there were many firings of professors who ran afoul,

ridiculed, or usurped the authority of the presidents who were dictatorial. Understandably this type of dictatorial control was frequently depicted as a quid pro quo in the game of race relations wherein the white power structure supported tight campus control by the president in return for keeping the faculty and students "in their place." In my judgment, however, much of the so-called dictatorship was a function of the president's personality and the times: many of the white school presidents of the day were equally dictatorial.

The mission and spirit of the HBCs is aptly summed up by Hugh Gloster:

> *I have not seen a white institution that is as caring and concerned about black students as the black colleges are. The black student has a friend in the black college that he does not have in the traditionally white institution. . . . Also, black students are much more comfortable in the black college. . . . A black college breeds confidence . . . and there are many students who come to the HBC without confidence, without hope, and get built up to the point where they are able to compete successfully. . . . Another big advantage is that the HBC focuses on the racial background and problems of black students. . . . At Morehouse, for example, we give a great deal of attention to the African and Afro-American backgrounds of our students, and we develop ways in which to tackle problems peculiar to those backgrounds. . . . We encourage a knowledge and understanding of African and Afro-American culture.*

Branson offered still another view of the mission of these schools:

> *The mission is very simple. We have a group of people in America who have been horribly mistreated—black*

people—and the job is for some of us to give our very best efforts to aid them in trying to understand the system and then gaining the intellectual skills and the social skills to become contributing members of that society, and that is what we want to do.

Billingsley (of Morgan, now retired) adds to this interpretation of the HBC mission in the following:

I think the role of the black college is multiple. One function is via the collegiate level—quality education for blacks and others who wish to attend and can benefit from these institutions. Black people are still grossly undereducated. . . . Black people are still discriminated against in other institutions. . . . Black people are still inadequately prepared at elementary and secondary levels for collegiate work and for life. So the black colleges have a major role in the education of black Americans to help them move into a more integrated society, into the mainstream, with levels of confidence in college, and also to prepare people in professional and graduate areas to move into higher levels of leadership, training, research, teaching, and so on. I think the black colleges also have a major role to play in preparing black students who come from very inadequate backgrounds, often preparing them to move into graduate schools of the general society. I think the black colleges have a pioneering role still to play, a missionary role . . . helping academically able and willing but often not well-prepared students make the transition. . . . That function is still needed because despite the fact that opportunities have opened up fantastically over the last fifteen years . . . there is still an ocean of need among blacks who have been left behind by some of the

progress in our society. So that traditional mission is still there.

Perhaps more vividly than any other of my interviewees, Billingsley captured the spirit in which the HBC mission has been and ought to be pursued:

HBCs should not shield people from the integrated society. But we need to recognize that not all blacks when they reach eighteen come through schools to compete at the highest level. So we ought to train them and prepare them and teach them because they can learn if they are taught. We ought not to pretend that they are already able and then throw them out into the society. We ought to prepare them. But not all of them. There are some black students . . . who come through good schools, who come through privileged family backgrounds, who are able . . . to move rapidly in any college setting, and they should be encouraged to do so. I also think . . . the black college should not be just for students who are disadvantaged but should also appeal to the able and talented . . . who want to move beyond the average but who would like to do so within . . . a predominantly black college.

Billingsly emphasized that black colleges are different from the traditionally white institutions (TWIs) in another way as well:

We have to care more because black talent is more rare and because we have a history, I think, in the black community of being concerned about trying to bring all the people along as far as their abilities and talents and habits will allow them to go.

Because there have been only two colleges for women among the HBCs, there has never been an extensive, specific comment in mission statements about the education of black women. However, in my interview with Willa Player (former president of Bennett College), she said:

> *Bennett was originally a co-ed institution. At that time in the South, the Northerners were very much interested in helping black higher education, and the women of the Methodist Church had established on co-ed campuses what they called "homes." And these homes were established for the education of "girls" because very little was being done for what we called "Negro girls" at the time. Bennett had on its co-ed campus a home called Kent Home, and the women (Methodist) decided they would like to go into the field of higher education for girls. So in 1926 Bennett became a women's college, and the main thrust was the best possible education . . . in three principle areas: home and family life, community service, and career preparation. . . . These were seen as essential emphases for women in higher education.*

Spelman College (the other college for black women) had much the same emphasis because of the presence of other liberal arts colleges in the Atlanta University Center, where there was a free exchange of classes, but other academic offerings were available as well. According to Albert Manley (retired president), when he first entered office in 1953, most of Spelman's graduates went into teaching or social work. He was pleased to report, however, that when he retired in the mid-'70s, over half of the graduates went on to graduate or professional schools, especially in the biological sciences, medicine, and dentistry.

While missions were adapted from time to time to changing circumstances, the underlying spirit of the HBCs, expressed in the desire to educate as many African Americans as possible and to render supportive and/or remedial assistance, remained constant. The philosophy was laudable and generous and resulted in college completion by many late bloomers and persons originally deficient in basic skills; however, in light of the record of HBC alumni in recent years, as competition has heightened, is that philosophy still viable? On one hand, the current prevailing image of HBCs is one of institutions that harbor students with pitifully low admission test scores, with persistent need for remediation, and low completion projections, producing undereducated, mediocre graduates. On the other hand, HBC graduates, despite the obstacles, become for the most part successful, contributing citizens of community and nation, with a representative percentage of leaders, thought provokers, and aspiring parents imbued with the democratic and economic values basic to American society. Can there be, for the average college graduate, any greater expectation? I believe sincerely that the answer is no. The record clearly shows that these schools have responded to the needs of their students and have, historically, inspired growth and taught their graduates how to be "free."

Nevertheless, the viability of this philosophy, as we look ahead, becomes questionable. With heightened competition and toughening survival requirements, these institutions have reached a point in their natural development calling for some change in mission and approach. This is expressed in the following comment from an interview with Luna Mishoe of Delaware State:

> *I decided, and the community (i.e., our faculty, board and students) bought the idea, that our best shots at survival and progressing were to develop here a fully*

> *integrated, high-quality small college. . . . We did change our mission a bit to include the fact that we were going to seriously develop here an integrated, high-quality, small college with opportunities for all who qualify. Now as a result of that . . . our enrollment is 68 percent black, 30 percent white and 2 percent other. Mishoe also observed: HBCs will not lose their identification any more than Notre Dame will lose its identification. It will remain a historically Catholic university of America and so Delaware State College will remain a historically black institution, and that will be in the charter, and we will have more black students, perhaps, than anybody else. But the educational program will be equal to that of any other institution at the level at which we proclaim we are working, and that is the way it has to be. When we graduate a person from Delaware State College in chemistry, we must say that here is a student who will match (on the average) other college graduates in chemistry, and you must not know that because of his performance you can trace him back to a predominantly black or historically black institution. That's what I mean.*

Beyond recognition of the need for integration is awareness of the need to enhance competitiveness and credibility, as reflected in the following excerpt from comments by Maceo Nance, retired president of South Carolina State College:

> *If our institutions are as important to us as the majority of our people think, then irrespective of what kind of packages can be offered to black students from other institutions (i.e., traditionally white institutions), they are going to have to send them to our institutions, and I'm talking about high achievers. There isn't any way*

we are going to maintain credibility admitting all of the average and marginal students.

Lionel Newsome of Central State University (now deceased) extends this thinking somewhat:

I think that the mission has changed a bit. At first it was a question of making available the opportunities for them even though those opportunities may not be realized at the highest level, but these young people would be better off by having gone to this black institution if only for two or three years—much better off than if they had gone at no time. Whereas today there are so many more opportunities out there for them that the black colleges now have the responsibility of raising the quality of education to such a level that these young people can compete in whatever their chosen area so that they do not have to hold their heads in shame.

Although the above statements from several presidents in office during the '80s reflect a clear recognition of the imperatives for institutional change in a new era, there is also some evidence of ambivalence stemming primarily from fears about operational considerations. This is obvious in the following statement made by Newsome, in response to a question about whether future-oriented changes were actually being made or simply being given lip service:

That is what I am worried about. . . . I don't think we are doing it. I think . . . that we are afraid to do it, but we have a kind of conflict—one is trying to keep enough students in the institution to get the funds needed to keep the institution alive, and the other one is trying to get them to reach that level of quality of education or reach a standard that they can compete wherever they

> *go. You really have a kind of contradiction in this, and it worries me. It worries the hell out of me.*

As the weight of desegregation falls on these institutions in the form of declining enrollments, new competitive requirements, rumors about mergers, accreditation problems, financial problems, quality issues, and suspicions of conspiracy against HBCs, the historic mission, spirit, and promise of these institutions are being eclipsed by wider mandates and new situational definitions. Newsome makes this clear:

> *Prior to desegregation the question of enrollment was not one the presidents were concerned about . . . but after the students began to go off to other institutions, they began to think . . . more in terms of keeping the enrollment at a level necessary to yield the budget required to carry on the regular program of the university. This meant many times they would admit students below the qualification levels of the earlier years. As . . . institutions in a desegregating society, certain requirements are put on them, such as . . . the standards set by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and by the North Central Association. I think there was . . . blinking of the eye at the standards prior to a real movement toward desegregation. After the movement really began, they began to watch these things more carefully to see that they met standards one, two, three—whatever the standards were.*

The transition period portrayed here reflects a dispiriting view of many first-rate, proud institutions in decline. But is it the only view?

5 Present and Future

If segregation is officially dead and integration is a national goal, why do we need black colleges? This has been a persistent question of the '70s and '80s that has fueled much debate and soul searching among both majority and minority citizens, especially during the period of flat enrollments (i.e., late '70s, early '80s). Available capacity suggested that a solution to the dilemma resided in mergers—black into white—and closings. This naturally outraged the minority segment because it appeared to be ethnocentrically rooted as well as insensitive to the symbolic role and historical contributions the HBCs had made to the country's educational landscape. Consequently, the counterargument focused on the value of the HBCs as a national educational resource and on the need for their continued existence as long as racial tendencies would be institutionalized.

As the debate widened and became highlighted through the Adams decision and the resulting desegregation mandates issued by the federal government deeming that dual public systems existed, changes in the above positions became evident. First, a key concept emerged with reference to the public HBCs: "enhancement." This was largely in response to arguments detailing historic institutional differences (i.e., TWIs vs. HBCs) in finances, academic resources, and politics. In other words, federal intervention in the process of desegregation resulted in the shelving of the threat of mergers and closings and a shot in the arm, so to speak, with enhancement appropriations for the HBCs.

Simultaneously, though, there was in the Adams decision and its ramifications a requirement that the TWIs increase black enrollment and faculty. This led in many

instances to special initiatives in the recruiting of both and tended to accelerate the shifting of black students, especially, to the TWIs. The faculty shift was much less dramatic but nevertheless noticeable. This was without a doubt the most notable trend of the '70 and '80s and perhaps the single greatest factor leading to the problems and woes of the HBCs during this period. By 1980 the process left these institutions with only 37 percent of all black students in colleges and universities in the United States, and, according to recent estimates, this figure is now in the neighborhood of only 20 percent. The implications are obvious.

Although most of the above relates to the public schools, the private schools, too, face an uncertain future. Obviously the disproportionate shifting of black students out of the HBCs into TWIs had a serious impact on the privately supported institutions. Not only did they lose enrollment, but they also experienced severe financial distress, despite newly gained state aid for in-state students, because they shortsightedly neglected to offset this decline by the enrollment of "other race" students. It is estimated that in the early '80s, in the United Negro Fund college group (i.e., forty-one schools) over 50 percent sustained serious enrollment decreases. In addition, faculty salaries lagged behind the national average, making it difficult for these schools to attract top-notch scholars and/or to retain well-qualified people. At the same time, because of decreased revenues and low endowments, it was necessary to defer physical plant maintenance. As a result, some of the plants in this group are in appalling condition, with no prospect for immediate attention. For these institutions the overall picture is, indeed, bleak. In recent years one prominent college (Bishop) has suffered bankruptcy and ceased operation. Others teeter at the brink but display an inexplicable staying power despite loss of accreditation and calamitous debt. Given such circumstances, one wonders how they continue to attract students.

In 1986, while Hugh Gloster was in office as president of Morehouse College, he remarked:

> *History has shown that a private black college experiences a very slow death. These colleges will lose accreditation, and then they will continue to operate as an unaccredited institution. We have not had a four-year black college close because of financial problems during the past twenty years, not one. [Note: These comments were made before Bishop closed in 1988.] We have had some two-year colleges close, two-year private colleges, but not any four-year colleges. And I think this trend will continue in the future, but I think that you will have an increasing number of weak private colleges lose accreditation, and they will lose enrollment, and then they will lose financial stability. Now, whether they will die is another question.*

HBC presidents vary widely in their views on the present and future of their institutions. They range from the utterly pessimistic at one extreme, including the idea of a conspiracy against HBCs, to an unequivocating assessment of indestructibility at the other extreme. In between are varying degrees of confidence in the HBC survivability based on better management techniques, increased competitiveness, accelerating integration, increased federal aid, increased enrollment, and improved quality and effectiveness.

Lionel Newsome, late president of Central State University in Ohio, and former president of two private institutions, offered the most pessimistic assessment of all the presidents I interviewed:

> *I think that the future is very dark. I don't see that many of these schools are going to survive. I think that they are going to become predominantly white or be merged*

> *out of existence—the public ones particularly, because of . . . high per-capita cost and . . . k about economies and . . . duplication. . . . This e . . . ncement will cost most of the states too much mo . . . d they are not willing to put that kind of money . . . n. I also think . . . that the black colleges will be the . . . ir own death because they are trying to do t . . . tings with too little. . . . They are not really . . . ing up to the standards as they should.*

Newsome felt this plight was the inevitable result of the social changes that had or were occurring, the implications of which were not fully recognized in the minority community. He asserted for example, that

> *the presidents would be considered Judases . . . if what we are saying here were repeated in a public forum or in a group of alumni. . . . You and I know that to do what we feel is the best thing for these institutions in many cases cannot be done. The institution would not survive because you would not get the kind of help needed. You are not going to get the kind of faculty or the kind of students that you need at this time. . . . I believe that there will be a number of HBCs closing, and if they do not close, they are not going to be very good institutions. I don't see that they can be, with the cost of education, quality of teachers—the kind we now have and those who are really good are leaving to move to other places. I think that we would be counterfeiting education or giving fraudulent degrees.*

Occasionally, when discussing the present status and future of the HBCs, one encounters among the presidents (both current and retired) a curious ambivalence. One perspective is a vision of faith in a continuing need for, and thus

the continuation of, HBCs. On the other hand there is the expression of a "conspiracy fear" about the future of these institutions. In discussing the future of his college, a retired president in Georgia voiced such fears:

> *Well, it may not go down the drain. . . . There are some excellent students in its student body . . . and there are many who require special remediation—not short term but long term, and that could become a selling point [for continuing the college]. But, of course, you are always confronted with the problem of public relations [when this is revealed]. . . . We wouldn't want to go as far as Parsons College did, but I think that you ought to make it clear that here is an institution willing to take students and help them along, and to see them grow, because it has done so successfully in the past. But you can never know what the white man has in mind because you are not a part of the power structure. Decisions are made about black education, and you are not a part of the decision-making party. You just don't know but there is, in my opinion, a plan that the power structure has for black education. I think it is national in scope, and it filters down to the state, the region and, in some instances, the local community, but you will never know exactly what the plans are for our black institutions.*

When I asked whether he felt that the disproportionate shifting of black students out of the HBCs into the TWIs would suggest that HBCs should be allowed to die from attrition, he said:

> *Could be! I just don't know. Our schools may be graduating many, many more students than the approximately 20 percent who have remained at HBCs*

after the shifting into the TWIs. We have to get that statistic straight.

Asked about this disproportionate shifting of students, another retired president said,

It frightens me. That may be a long-term scheme to leave to the black institutions the weaker students and let them perish as a result.

In almost the same breath, when asked what this means for the future of these schools, he replied,

It is not good, but I still believe that if they hold on to unique programs and can point to them as milestones of success, they will get more and more funds, and as we send more and more blacks to the state legislatures, they are going to be able to increase the financial support.

It is clear that in the statements of these two former presidents an inexplicable logic accommodates the ambivalence. There is an uneasiness in their thinking, but at the same time there is a hope—almost a faith—that, conspiracies notwithstanding, there is an inextinguishable flame or spirit that guarantees the continued existence, in one form or another, of the HBCs.

The pessimism balances an optimism that is somewhat perplexing given current trends and the "marginality," so to speak, of HBCs today. Nevertheless, Willa Player, former president of Bennett College (N.C.) and one time director of the Title III Program in the U.S. Department of Education, under the Federal Higher Education Act, makes the following assertion:

> *The black institutions have existed for over 100 years, and they are going to exist for all time, even though people have tried to say many derogatory things about the ineffectiveness of black colleges. I think they will continue to exist because there are a whole lot of people out there whose needs need to be served and who, as they become more articulate and more conscious of the fact that higher education is necessary, will be seeking enrollment in these colleges.*

Other parts of the interview with Player make it clear that her unequivocal faith in the persistence of the HBCs stems from her belief that there will always be a segment of blacks or minorities in the population that will be excluded from higher education opportunities in the larger society and that can be served by HBCs. She also believes that many minority students will never be able to succeed in the atmosphere of hostility at many of the large, desegregated institutions. This assumption is shared and articulated fairly often in the black higher education community today and is sometimes called the "discomfort index." A number of black officials, faculty members, and students speculate that ultimately it will be the cause of a "reverse shift" of black students migrating back to the HBCs. To date, however, statistics, to the best of my knowledge, do not reflect such, and, I am inclined to speculate, will never do so. The change that has occurred does not appear to be reversible or retrogressive.

Moderately pessimistic views, less extreme than the one discussed above, are common among the presidents. Gloster (of Morehouse) and Manley (of Spelman) believe that only the strongest HBCs will survive. Gloster remarked,

> *I think you will have an increasing number of weak private colleges lose accreditation, and they will lose*

enrollment, then financial stability. We are facing a future in which an increasing number of predominantly black private (and predominantly white) colleges will wither.

Gloster also differentiated between the private school and the state supported. He felt that the latter faced a better future.

The black state colleges have a better chance of survival for political reasons. If you have a strong black vote and if you have strong political leadership in a state, it will be very difficult for that state to eliminate or merge the black public college. A good example of a failure there is in Tallahassee, Florida, where they would really like to merge Florida A&M into Florida State. [The two are one block apart.] . . . They have not really followed through. They don't follow through because of political considerations.

President Emeritus Manley concurs:

As I see historically black institutions and relate them to the future, I think that only the strongest—from the point of view of endowment, faculty and interest of students in the institution—will survive. Now whether it is going to take twenty or thirty years or longer I don't know, but I don't believe that an institution with an endowment, say of a million dollars—and with the way that funds today are not as available for student financial aid as they once were—[can continue to attract students]. It cannot out of its endowment or finances offer more scholarships than it did.

Andrew Billingsly (Morgan State University) felt that HBCs still have a distinct mission to perform as Afro-Ameri-

can cultural centers and as catalysts for better relations with the Third World. He also felt that new and innovative curricula and more open-minded faculty could improve the future of the HBCs.

> *I think the future of black colleges is precarious because there is not the understanding and the support for them that they need. I think that they are needed, however, in the future not only because of the academic mission they serve but . . . for other functions as well. Black colleges, for example, are a center of black culture.*

Also:

> *Black colleges could be a major resource for this nation in contacts with the Third World, the African . . . and Caribbean world. . . . The future of black colleges needs to be looked at not just in terms of what has been done in the past. They need to be doing some different things than they have done in the past. For example, when I proposed at Morgan that we develop a new curriculum in transportation studies, I was ridiculed by some faculty members. They asked, "What do you mean, 'transportation studies?' We ought to be doing a better job of undergraduate liberal arts." Well, I think in order to get ready for the future, you've got to do some new things and some different things—telecommunications and international management in our case. You have to take advantage of these institutions, their history, their culture and sensitivity to do some new things. If you don't have the faculty interested then you have to have strong presidents supported by their boards and the legislatures and the public to do some new things, and they have to recruit some faculty members who are expert in some of these areas. . . . Or*

they have to send some of these faculty members . . . back to school to learn some of these new areas which they would do voluntarily. You have to have strong presidential leadership. It is hard these days to have it, but I think the colleges that will survive best will be those who are able to find ways to do that. You can't have new programs if the faculty members doing existing programs vote no and nobody else has the ability to go ahead.

Somewhat less pessimistic but nevertheless cognizant of the realities requiring change, Warren Morgan, president of Paul Quinn College, a small, church-related school in Texas, commented:

I think that those black institutions that are well managed, that have visionary leadership, and that are in tune with the future . . . will thrive and will do well. . . . In addition . . . we have to recognize that in the future, public schools may not be the only place in which to go to seek students to help with our enrollments. We are going to have to look more and more at the community outreach center programs; we are going to have to look at community and junior colleges. We are going to have to look again to the military because a large number of black students are now going out of high school . . . into the military. . . . Additionally we are going to have to broaden our concept of what a "black" student is. And I think that we need to include in that category, particularly here in Texas, the Hispanic students. . . . If we do that, I think there will be a continuous place for us to carry out our mission and our role without compromise. One of the things I think is going to be more and more difficult will be to compete from a standpoint of "blackness," and we are going to

have to shift from the concept of blackness perpetuating our existence to the concept of quality. . . . The more we place emphasis on quality, the better off we are going to be. Now "quality" here does not in my mind refer to that student who scores 1,500 on the SAT. . . . It calls for identifying what it is you are going to do and then doing it well. It calls for identifying the needs of your students, teaching those students at their level of need, and ending up with a good product. As an example, we say to many of our students, "Now, you may come to Paul Quinn based on your potential, but whether you remain here will be based on your performance."

Perhaps the most complete recognition of the realities of survival and strategic adjustments needed for the future is reflected in comments from my interview with James Lyons, president of Bowie State University (Md.).

Historically black colleges have suffered. They've lost the academically talented undergraduate in many respects, they've lost the black scholar, they've lost the black athlete, and this has taken a toll. . . . And it makes the historic mission obsolete. One of the things I don't buy, and I might as well say this for the record—I don't believe that our future as black institutions is based on our educating a student that nobody else wants, that nobody else is willing to deal with. I don't accept that as a reason for being. . . . There are some people who still use that argument, but we are dealing today with a different student (not one simply rejected because of race or color as was the case when the historic mission was developed). In the environment of this state people do not accept "developmental education" or "compensatory education" as a mission for a state college. . . . We are sitting in a community [Washington, D.C. area]

> *where up to-50,000 new jobs—mostly research and technical—are projected to emerge over the next six to ten years. I must look at our future in terms of this growth in this community, or we will be gobbled up.*

J. Max Bond, founder of the University of Liberia and one-time dean at Atlanta University, remarked that "a number of struggling black colleges might usefully be combined to produce one decent school."[12] Joseph Perkins, writing in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1988, argued that one-third of the 100 traditionally black colleges should become two-year institutions. He argued that there simply are not enough black students left to support these colleges, and it is only a matter of time and market place before the weaker competitors "lose out."[13] Because of the constricting markets, some fifty HBCs, most of them private, have already experienced major decreases in enrollment, as noted earlier, and consequent fiscal and administrative difficulties. So, like J. Max Bond's, Perkins's solution is reconfiguration for many. He points out that 40 percent of all blacks in higher education are in two-year colleges, while just 10 percent of all black colleges are in this category.

Herman Branson, president emeritus of Lincoln University (Pa.), told me:

> *The fundamental issue is the trivialization of higher education. There's no point in going to Michigan if you are going to major in black studies, and there's no point in going to Harvard if you learn nothing abut the nature of man in the 21st century.*

I believe Branson is suggesting that the selection of a college is a process that should be governed strictly in terms of the best match between one's interest and what an institu-

tion offers. Anything outside of the educational equation as a basis for the decision becomes trivial.

The Reverend Samuel D. Proctor, one-time president of Virginia Union University and North Carolina A&T University, shed further light on the black college/white college choice and the larger problem of where a black student can obtain the best education when he remarked that "the quality of the courses and the attitude of the individual student are more important than the predominant color of his classmates." He was especially critical of an oft-heard presumption that racism on white campuses should be a reason for not attending such an institution and/or a reason to expect a reverse migration of black students as some presidents and many in the black community are prone to think. Commenting on his own experiences in the '40s at the University of Pennsylvania, he said:

> *Whatever it was that enabled us to stick it out and come through with a degree—even if we were too uncomfortable to march in the commencement procession—we seem to have lost. . . . Our embrace of our blackness was an important corollary of the civil rights movement. The black nationalists made all of us feel bolder and more accepting of ourselves. But it also left many of our people in a no man's land. They are not white, but they aren't really able to leave and go to Haiti or Africa. Sure, there's a whole lot of Africa in us. But we were baptized into an Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethos, and you can no more escape it than you can sneak daybreak past a healthy rooster. The young black who knows only the white side or the black side cannot survive.*

The conclusion of the discussion in which Bond, Branson, and Proctor participated (as reported by William Raspberry) was as follows: The problem is to find ways to make black

students sufficiently comfortable with their blackness that they are able to function in a predominantly white society, and if that happens, then the black school/white school choice may become merely a matter of taste.

An interesting sidelight on the problem of white campus/black campus choice comes from a black student with a background of having been reared in an affluent Maryland community (Columbia), having attended integrated schools (predominantly white), who, while attending Harvard, elected to spend a semester at Howard University as part of her senior thesis project. Her main interest was to discover what it would be like (for a change) to be a member of the majority for the first time. She therefore attended Howard looking for a "black university," but what she found was less clear cut. In fact, she reported in her thesis that Howard is more similar to the predominantly white colleges than she and most black transfer students expected. (Her thesis was based on interviews with fifty transfer students attending that semester.) She reported further that its student body is large and diverse, often "apolitical," tending to be "cool and aloof." She also discovered that to a newcomer, Howard was not supportive or nurturing and that registration was a four-day rude awakening to Howard's large bureaucracy. On the positive side, she indicated that she easily "found a niche" based not on race but on interests and background. It was her view that in transferring to a predominantly black university "race becomes . . . less of an issue" and that a student is able to develop as an individual, not "as a representative of the black race." Interestingly, after her period at Howard, even though reporting that three-quarters of the transfer students in her survey would recommend Howard to their black friends, she decided to return to Harvard. "I had gone through three years of Harvard, and I enjoyed it. I think black students should go where they are comfortable and where they are challenged."

According to this study, black students at white schools tend to want to prove that their "blackness" is not lost in such attendance. On the other hand, at a school like Howard the main concern is, "How will I stand out in this crowd and make a name for myself?" The study also noted that what the transfer students most disliked about Howard were its administrative slackness and relatively poor living conditions. These drawbacks were offset, however, by positive feelings toward professors and fellow students.[14]

The future of the HBCs, as shown in the above comments and observations, rests on the following: improved management and financing, an increased competitive spirit, innovative programming addressed to the larger community, market place considerations, demographics, increasing diversity in the country, (possibly) reconfiguration, and establishment and maintenance of perceived quality. Without this latter especially, denigrating references such as that made by Thomas Sowell will be increasingly likely.

> *For black students with strong academic backgrounds and composite S.A.T. scores about 1,000, there are simply no black colleges to match them with academically.*[15]

His view is the ultimate "put-down," opinionated and unsubstantiated, but nevertheless reflective of a fairly pervasive attitude in the majority community. Confounding though, and to some, intriguing, is the fact that Sowell, a well-known conservative scholar, is black (Hoover Institute, Stanford University) and employed as a senior fellow in a conservative think tank.

No account of the status and future of the HBCs can be complete without reference to three educational associations. The best known and perhaps the most effective in terms of publicizing the cause of such schools is the United Negro

College Fund (UNCF) (founded 1943). Throughout the world of business, in the national white community as well as the black community, African American higher education is identified with UNCF despite the fact that it deals primarily with only about forty private colleges, and this has been the case since its initiation. Its slogan, "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste," is a marketing triumph which, in my view, has not been equaled by any other educational support effort. UNCF's major contribution, through the years, has been largely a cooperative institutional fund-raising endeavor on behalf of its member institutions. The funds raised annually have only recently reached the $40-50-million level, which means that when spread throughout its member institutions, no one receives a major budget infusion. Nevertheless, because the institutions involved are all relatively small, the amount is, to say the least, strategic. Larger benefits also accrue from the interest peaked during the annual national fund-raising campaigns among business and community supporters and participants as well as alumni. A loyalty and "esprit" have been engendered so that many graduates of black colleges and affiliated organizations make donations annually to escape either group censure and/or guilty feelings. The historical impact has been remarkable in this regard, even though only a third or less of HBC enrollees attend UNCF schools.

Part of the success of UNCF's appeal relates to the widely held view that public institutions receive all of the funds needed from state government; this is perhaps the greatest misperception about public higher education in the United States. Actually, the so-called state-supported institutions receive anywhere from 50-60 percent of their operating budgets from state sources, and the remainder must be raised through tuition and fees, and gifts and grants. Because their size and budgets are considerably larger than those of the private schools, the resultant fund-raising burden is significant.

The trade-off for membership in the UNCF group is a fairly tight limitation on fund raising outside the organization's annual campaign. Because of this, a few private schools, such as Hampton University, have elected to operate outside UNCF membership. Apparently for those that have remained, the benefits have outweighed the disadvantages, and, all in all, UNCF has been a very constructive, effective, cooperative endeavor. In the future, however, there may be a need for philosophical changes more in tune with the shifts in minority education initiated by desegregation.

The second support organization of note is the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO). It surfaced in the '60s to provide technical assistance to the HBCs and serve as a national lobbying presence in the nation's capital. It has been eminently successful in this latter function as well as in serving as an information-gathering and dispensing center on black higher education. Because of talent and experience weaknesses, however, it was never a major factor in the provision of technical assistance.

Because NAFEO represents all of the black schools—public, private, two year, etc.—it has had a recognizable political impact in the interest of the HBCs and has served as a major coordinator of institutional group thinking about specific issues bearing on the progress and welfare of education for blacks and predominantly black institutions. From these perspectives, it has been a success and has fostered a visibility of consequence.

A regret I had while president, and one shared by some of the older and retired presidents, was that NAFEO did not use its national conference to deal in a systematic and sustained manner with the emerging problems of the HBCs as desegregation progressed. Nor did it seem to expose the member presidents to "state-of-the art" management and planning, curriculum building, creative and innovative programming, new delivery systems, and extracurricular

dynamics. While in office I felt that the NAFEO conference was an annual sociopolitical event, with a conscientiously planned and elaborate program reflecting the interests of the executive director rather than the relevant needs of its constituents. Beyond membership (arising from a sense of racial obligation) there were few cost-benefit gains. Occasionally NAFEO arranged for overseas trips for presidents to observe foreign education, particularly African, and to establish partnership networks. Undoubtedly such trips were beneficial for individuals, but only questionably so for institutions.

Comments from three presidents familiar with both associations follow.

Wade Wilson, late president of Cheyney, says of NAFEO:

> *We are now at the 11th conference of NAFEO—and I have attended all but two—I get the feeling that NAFEO should have at least one or two nontheoretical sessions—'how to' sessions for the presidents. . . . Let me elaborate. . . . Several colleges have been in trouble. As I look through the program of this convention, there is very little to show a president who needs help a way out of a dilemma. I would suspect that financial management . . . should be one ongoing session, and another ongoing session should deal with the politics of survival or perhaps "positive politics."*

Maceo Nance, president emeritus of South Carolina State College, commented:

> *We were both involved in this organization [NAFEO] from the very beginning in 1969. We know how it evolved. It evolved out of something else, and we had to establish a quasi-organization because we were receiv-*

ing government funds, and we couldn't lobby and do the kinds of things that we normally do receiving funds. I believe it is providing a service, and it showed a kind of unity a lot of people thought didn't exist or could exist among competing black institutions, private and public. Now, UNCF has probably done one of the best jobs of any organization that I know of in terms of public relations. It is very unfortunate that it is being used, and has been used, in my opinion, as a vehicle for major corporations to hide behind in terms of giving to black higher education. It never ceases to amaze me that everything we—NAFEO and others—have tried to do . . . to show the general public that the United Negro College Fund serves only 41 institutions has failed.

James Lyons said,

NAFEO has been extremely helpful, and I hope that there will continue to be enough similarity among the institutions for it to continue to be beneficial. There are times when I feel that . . . institutions have more things that are different than similar due to . . . local politics. But NAFEO is proving to be a very important umbrella, as I see it. . . . NAFEO is respected and is viewed as an organization tht is to be dealt with and reckoned with as it relates to historically black colleges. It is an important advocate. On all big issues they seek the position of NAFEO.

From the above comments it is clear that both NAFEO and UNCF have made and are making significant contributions to the cause and operation of the HBCs despite some operational shortcomings.

The third entity, the Office for the Advancement of Public Black Colleges, is a creation of the National Association

of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. In a limited way it performs a function somewhat similar to NAFEO's. Although useful, it is only a department and has by its very charter had to be historically tilted toward the land-grant group (i.e., seventeen HBC members).

One other organization that should be mentioned is the Moton Institute. Its single overall contribution was in training development (fund raising) officers. Through an affiliated agency called the College Endowment Funding Plan (CEFP), it facilitated the initiation of institutional endowments, which, for those involved, was a significant enterprise. Through a unique combination of low-interest funds borrowed from participating insurance corporations and funds strategically invested over a thirty-year period, a substantial yield could be anticipated. This was a skilled, sophisticated approach to endowment building that normally would not have been pursued or even conceived by the participating institutions. Regrettably, CEFP no longer operates nor does the Moton Institute, which recently merged with UNCF.

Because of changes underway, the historical effectiveness of these special support groups is threatened. More and more public institutions are soliciting and receiving funds from the business world, which may reduce UNCF income in the future.

NAFEO's effectiveness will probably lessen as HBC enrollment decreases, particularly if its program thrusts do not address the survival problems of its constituents in a practical and realistic manner. For example, major funders (Pew, Mellon, and Mott) announced in 1988 they would take a "targeted" approach in their grant programs for historically black colleges based on financial viability.[16] The president of UNCF responded that these targeted programs could be the straw that breaks the camel's back for some colleges because

financial strength is a crucial factor in accreditation decisions, and loss of accreditation results in loss of eligibility to receive federal funds as well as UNCF funds.

As indicated time and time again in this chapter, without a new competitive stance and outward thrust toward the community at large (majority and minority), continued existence for most HBCs is questionable. UNCF and NAFEO could be endangered as well.

6 Postscript: Desegregation in Reverse

Almost unnoticed and certainly unheralded, and surprising to many, non-African Americans are attending the HBCs in increasing numbers. This contradicts, in a comforting way, the conventional thinking that the integrative process flows only, or primarily, from minority to majority institutions. Enrollment data indicate that only three traditionally black institutions out of approximately 100 had student bodies at that time that were 100 percent black: Selma University (Alabama), Allen University (South Carolina), and St. Augustine's College (North Carolina). Of the 100 or so, four are 99 percent black and thirty-two (including the aforementioned) are 95 percent or more black.[17] In other words, about one-third of the traditionally black colleges, for all intents and purposes, are practically as segregated now as before the desegregation decisions.

On the other side of the coin, however, forty-six of these institutions have enrollments ranging from 10 percent nonblack to 40 percent or more. The breakdown is as follows: twenty-six HBCs are in the 10 percent category, twelve are at 20 percent, and eight are 33 percent or more nonblack. Schools with more than 30 percent include Delaware State, Bowie State, Langston University, and Tennessee State. In addition, four of the historically black institutions now have student bodies in which whites constitute the majority: West Virginia State, Lincoln University in Missouri, Bluefield State (W.Va.), and Kentucky State. (The above tally does not total 100 because I am not including traditionally black institutions

with low white enrollments but relatively high foreign—white and nonwhite—and/or Hispanic enrollments.

It should be noted that in all instances where there is "high" integration, state-supported institutions are involved. Private schools, for the most part, reflect little or no movement in this direction, which is somewhat surprising because in the early days of segregation these schools were often described as "open to all" and in a few dramatic instances actually did enroll children of white missionary faculty, in open violation of the segregation laws.

The size of the institution also seems to be a relevant factor. For example of the thirty-two schools with 95 percent or more black students, nineteen had enrollments under 1,000; eight had enrollments of 1,000-2,000; only three had more than 2,000 students. From another perspective, in the eight HBCs with more than one-third nonblack students, the enrollments were well over 2,000, with one exception, and in that instance the figure was only slightly less.

It is easy to speculate, therefore, that because of public status and size, the additional factors of curriculum breadth and resources significantly enhance the appeal of these institutions across racial lines. Other factors are undoubtedly involved, too, such as location, leadership outreach, special and strategic programs, delivery systems specially tailored to nontraditional and commuting students and, of course, conscientiously monitored state desegregation plans mandated by the federal government.

The above indicates that a "new day" is developing in higher education in this country, signaling a developing validation of the idea that diversity can be accommodated and legitimized by increasing public sensitivity through the encouragement of new arrangements and mind-sets that address the needs and imperatives of shifting times. Traditionally white segregated institutions were forced by court

decisions to change their practices. Institutional adaptations have been reasonably well implemented so that now one might wonder why there was ever so much agony or emotional travail over such a "simple" social adjustment.

It has been amply demonstrated that accepting diversity is not dangerous, disruptive, or dispiriting but rather potentially positive and reflective of the "unfolding design" of human life. So education leaders should not have reservations about actively participating in the desegregation process in this country and especially in higher education. This is particularly true on the black side of the equation when not to do so could mean institutional suicide for some as the process redistributes students.

Occasionally one hears that black educational institutions must be preserved retaining their special historical role for the benefit of those who for various reasons—cultural, educational, or socio-psychological—find it difficult to function in the larger society. Although it cannot be denied that some still need the kind of acculturative bridging that HBCs can provide, more and more majority institutions are beginning to recognize and serve this function. Therefore, the historic mission of minority institutions should not be their only reason for being. It is too self-limiting, too comfortable operationally, and risks numbing inertia and competitive disadvantage.

There is no single prescription for the future. But it is clear that an adamant retention of an official emphasis on "blackness" and confinement to the psychology of the minority community as opposed to "mainstreaming" will not serve these institutions or their students very well in the future. While integration is by no means complete as a process or social condition, educational institutions bear significant responsibility for reducing differentials in cultural participation. HBCs must educate for life and work in the unsheltered,

integrated society, and majority group institutions must play a role in the recognition that diversity can facilitate a secure, stable, and rewarding civilization.

The symbolism of this increasing demographic change in the historically black institutions bodes well for the future I have attempted to describe and could lead to open enrollment patterns and broader student resource pools at many minority institutions. The benefits of a minority institution need not be restricted to that minority.

Notes

1 John Hope Franklin, *An Illustrated History of Black Americans* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1970), p. 62.

2 Samuel P. Wiggins, *Higher Education in the South* (Berkeley: McCutchan Pub. Corp., 1966), p. 228.

3 Wade Hall, *The Rest of the Dream: The Black Odyssey of Lyman Johnson* (University Press of Kentucky, 1988. Quote reprinted in *The Chroncile of Higher Education*, 18 January 1989), p. B-3.

4 From interview with Fred Patterson, late president of Tuskegee University.

5 Earl Mcgrath, *The Predominantly Negro Colleges and Universities in Transition* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965), p. 11.

6 Arnold H. Taylor, *Travail and Triumph: Black Life and Culture in the South Since the Civil War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 126-127.

7 Ibid., p. 132.

8 W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth," in Booker T. Washington et al. *The Negro Problem* (N.Y., 1970) pp. 33-34.

9 Taylor, pp. 130-135.

10 Taylor, pp. 127-130. (The data on the founding agencies, the dates, and institutions came exclusively from this source.)

11 Data on the evolution of the black colleges are based on Susan Hill, *Traditionally Black Institutions 1860-1982* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1987).

12 J. Max Bond, quoted in *The Washington Post*, 2 September 1988, p. A21.

13 Joseph Perkins, "Survival Plan for Black Colleges," *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 June 1987.

14 "Student's Thesis Explores Her Black Identity," *The Washington Post*, 9 September 1989, pp. B1, B7.

15 Thomas Sowell, *Choosing a College: A Guide for Parents and Students* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 133.

16 *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 July 1988, pp. A29-30.

17 "Minority enrollment at 3,200 institutions of higher education," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 6 July 1988.

About the Author

Now retired, Albert N. Whiting was chancellor of North Carolina Central University for seventeen years. He devoted forty-two years—his entire career—to historically black colleges and universities. Before his chancellorship he served as dean of the college at Morgan State College (Md.); prior to that he held professional and administrative positions at Fisk University (Tenn.), Bennett College (N.C.), Atlanta University (Ga.), and Morris Brown College (Ga.).

He has served on numerous boards of trustees, including those for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, Educational Testing Service, and University of Maryland System. He has published articles in dozens of periodicals, among them *Change, The Chronicle of Higher Education, College Programs in Inter-Group Relations, Social Forces, Educational Record, Journal of Negro Education, Liberal Education,* and *The Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negros;* as well as a chapter on HBCs in AASCU's book *Minorities in Public Higher Education: At a Turning Point.*